

B.V. PETELIN: SCIENTIST, EDUCATOR AND CITIZEN



The 20th February 2018 marked the 70th birthday of Boris Valentinovich Petelin, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor of the Department of History and Philosophy, Cherepovets State University. For me, he is a sincere friend, a remarkable colleague, who I have met many times at many scientific events in Vologda and Cherepovets, as well as in Brest and Vitebsk.

He was born in Velsk, in the Russian North, in the family of a school teacher, having followed into the footsteps of his grandmother and father as far as the family profession concerned. He finished a comprehensive school in Plesetsk (Arkhangelsk region), worked in the geological survey expedition No. 19 of the Leningrad Hydro-project, served in the Soviet Army, studied to be a professional driver and worked in construction organizations. But the family tradition was stronger: in 1970 he entered Vologda State Pedagogical Institute at the Faculty of History. History was the subject he took most seriously. He was lucky to have Professor A.S. Blank as a teacher, who by that time had become a famous scientist, a specialist in German history, and worked at the Department of World History. Thanks to his initiatives, the topical association on German history was created at Vologda State Pedagogical Institute in the early 1970s, which played a significant role in the evolvement and further development of national Germanic studies. For a student, and then a teacher Boris Petelin, Aleksandr Solomonovich turned out to be the mentor, who until the very end (passed away on 20.01.1985) helped his pupil in life and scientific activity, despite all the obstacles that were put up for the famous scientist¹.

B.V. Petelin graduated with honors. Aleksandr Solomonovich advised him to continue with the post-graduate studies, promised to help, but by that time he had lost his post as head of the department ... Besides, Boris Petelin was already a family man, his son was born, for the last year of his studies he was renting a room in the city and could stay there but was assigned to a rural school. To embark on postgraduate studies was only possible as part of the 'target' plan, so he had to look for other opportunities. In this search, he was supported by the head of History Department of

¹ Blank A.S. Glavnoe delo. Iz neopublikovannogo [The most important thing. From the unpublished]. *Arhiv B.V. Petelina* [B.V. Petelin's archives].

Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia in Leningrad (now St Petersburg) V.K. Furaev, who invited Boris Petelin for a job interview, after which he became an office-seeker at the department. The topic of the dissertation research was suggested by A.S. Blank. He advised to consider the history of the CDU in Germany. The German Communist Party, around the history of which the thesis had been written, “is not a promising <topic>”, Blank told him, “however the Conservatives are worth having a try, especially since there have been almost no works on them in the Soviet Union”.



Conference at Vologda State Pedagogical Institute, May 1983,
where B.V. Petelin was among the participants.

The last major scientific event organized by Professor A.S. Blank, took place in Vologda in May 1983. It attracted, without exaggeration, the ‘cream of society’ engaged with the Soviet Germanic studies. The topic of the meeting was determined by its title: ‘Progressive, revolutionary, democratic and anti-fascist traditions in German history’, however the content of the reports was much broader than the ‘revolutionary tradition’. B.V. Petelin spoke at one of the sections on the activities of the conservative politician of German Federative Republic Franz Josef Strauss. At the final plenary session, his speech was noted by the prominent scientist Specialist in German history, A.I. Borozniak, which was very important for him².

² In September 1983, I passed Ph.D. defense devoted to the problems of intra-party development of the CDU in Germany in the Dissertation Council of the Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia in Leningrad (now St Petersburg). Reviews were submitted for the author’s abstract,

Unfortunately, it was not possible to publish the conference reports. Only brief theses were issued³. By that time, A.S. Blank only held the appointment of a visiting professor at the department, which raised additional difficulties in carrying out the scientific work. After his sudden death, it was not possible to maintain the attained level at Vologda State Pedagogical Institute. His students (Blank trained more than 20 historians – specialists in the Germanic studies) took different paths. However, the topical association in Vologda gave birth to other centers of German studies: in Tomsk and Kemerovo, Voronezh and Lipetsk, Ivanovo and Yaroslavl⁴.

In 1989, Boris Valentinovich began teaching at Vologda State Pedagogical University at the Department of General History. Teaching of a special course ‘History and historiography of fascism’ (this course was delivered by A.S. Blank) was reinstated at the Faculty of History, a new special course ‘Actual problems of modern Germany’ was introduced, and the topics for term papers and degree projects on German history were expanded. In the studies, the following areas appeared: activities of the political parties CDU and CSU in West Germany, evolution of German political system, the nature and content of social and political problems in German society, German policy of West Germany’s political parties. The scientific ties with historians-German scholars from Volgograd, Yekaterinburg, Voronezh, Kemerovo, as well as the Center for German Studies of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences were restored.

In the early 1990s, close ties with the Memorial Museum of German anti-fascists (Krasnogorsk) were established. It was there that in 1993, at the International Conference dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the National Committee for a Free Germany, the Associate Professor B.V. Petelin made a report on the problems of German Resistance in the works of A.S. Blank⁵. The history of captivity in war was interest-

including one from A.I. Borozniak. The response was positive, but it was noted that the historians from the GDR ‘infiltrated’ into the list with the historians’ names from the FRG. The abstract was printed in a hurry; it was necessary to cut the volume directly in the printing house, which led to such an anecdotal evidence. Aleksandr Ivanovich was not only knowledgeable, but also a meticulous opponent, and never ignored even the tiniest inaccuracies.

³ See: *Progressivnye, revoliutsionnye, demokraticheskie, antifashistskie traditsii v germanskoi istorii. Tezisy dokladov (mai 1983 g.)* [Progressive, revolutionary, democratic and anti-fascist traditions in German history. Conference abstracts (May 1983)]. Vologda, 1983.

⁴ Regarding the life and creative works of A.S. Blank, see his students’ book: Kashin R.G. *Operedivshii vremia* [The Man ahead of Time]. Moscow, 2006. The review for the book was written by A.S. Blank’s post-graduate student B.L. Khavkin, now Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor of Russian State University for the Humanities. For more details see: *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia* [New and Contemporary History], 2006, no. 5, pp. 215–217.

⁵ In the report, the author presented the new facts and judgments of A.S. Blank regarding the National Committee for a Free Germany, not previously published in the open press. See: Petelin B.V. *Deiatel'nost' Natsional'nogo Komiteta “svobodnaia Germaniia” v istoricheskikh trudakh A.S. Blanka* [The activities of the National Committee for a Free Germany in the historical works of A.S.

ing for the students of Boris Valentinovich. For several years, they arrived in Krasnogorsk, worked in the museum with the documentary materials necessary to complete their graduation papers. The Vologda students were greatly assisted by the museum staff and its management: Director, Candidate of Historical Sciences A.A. Krupennikov and Provost for Research, Candidate of Historical Sciences (PhD) V.A. Vsevolodov.

It was A.S. Blank who began to investigate such a complicated problem in many respects as the German prisoners of war and their stay on the territory of the Soviet Union. In 1979, his book on German prisoners of war in the USSR was published in Cologne, which sparked a discussion in the West German bundestag⁶. The Soviet captivity appeared not so terrible as it had been portrayed before. A.S. Blank wrote his book mainly based on his personal memories (during the war he had to be in close contact with the German prisoners of war in the Soviet camps, including Field Marshal Paulus)⁷.

The study of the history of captivity in war was continued in Vologda in the 1990s. In this area, V.B. Konasov, a historian from Vologda, whose PhD thesis was devoted to the activities of medical personnel during the Great Patriotic War, showed his worth. However, in the future, this 'framework' turned out to be too narrow for him. It is difficult to say what scientific achievements V.B. Konasov would have made, if B.V. Petelin had not introduced him to the Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor A.I. Borozniak, who significantly helped the native of Vologda in the study of a complicated scientific problem⁸.

Whilst studying the previously unknown archival documents, V. Konasov conducted a comprehensive scientific analysis devoted to the German prisoners of war staying in the USSR⁹. V.B. Konasov's articles and his speeches at conferences attracted the attention of both Russian and foreign specialists. The author had many fol-

Blank]. *Sbornik materialov rossiisko-germanskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii. Moskva – Krasnogorsk 7–9 sentiabria 1993* [The Collection of writings for the Russian-German scientific-practical conference. Moscow – Krasnogorsk, 7–9th September 1993]. Krasnogorsk, 1994, pp. 123–129.

⁶ Blank A. *Die deutschen Kriegsgefangenen in der UdSSR*. Köln, 1979.

⁷ See: Blank A.S., Khavkin B.L. *Vtoraia zhizn' fel'dmarshala Pauliusa* [The Second Life of Field Marshal Paulus]. Moscow, 1990.

⁸ The famous Vologda writer and journalist G.A. Akin'khov in his book 'Breakthrough' published in Vologda in 2008, wrote not only about the scientific achievements of V.B. Konasov, but also about the support he was provided with on part of such famous scientists as A.I. Borozniak

⁹ See: Konasov V.B. *Sud'by nemetskikh voennoplennykh v SSSR: diplomaticheskie, pravovye i politicheskie aspekty problemy. Ocherki i dokumenty* [The fate of German prisoners of war in the USSR: Diplomatic, legal and political aspects of the problem. Essays and Documents]. Vologda, 1996.

lowers, and the topic of captivity in war was developed further¹⁰. The success of the Vologda scientists and the support of the local authorities made it possible to revive the tradition of holding scientific conferences with the participation of Germanist historians.

In 1995, two scientific and practical conferences dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War were held in Vologda. The composition of the conference, despite financial pressure in the universities, was quite impressive. At the conference in Vologda held on 15–18th February – ‘Lessons and problems of historical studies related to World War II’, the work of one of the sub-forums was dedicated to the memory of Professor A.S. Blank, led by his close associate, Doctor of Historical Sciences A.I. Borozniak. He also made the opening speech on the scientific heritage of A.S. Blank. B.V. Petelin came the fifth with his speech after the well-known scientists of Russia A. Borozniak, R. Kashin, Iu. Galaktionov and A. Tsfasman. The participants of the conference visited the burial site of A.S. Blank at Poshekhonsky Cemetery in Vologda.

Based on the work of the conferences, a few scientific collections were published. Together with the Vologda researchers, such authors as V.A. Artemov, A.I. Borozniak, A.A. Buldakov, Iu.V. Galaktionov, V.P. Galitskii, L.N. Garanin, S.V. Kretinin, G.M. Sadovaia, M.V. Khodiakov, V.L. Chernoperov, A.B. Tsfasman and others published their articles and abstracts¹¹.

The achieved success in studying history of captivity in war allowed for arranging an international scientific conference ‘Problems of captivity in war: history and modernity’ held in Vologda on 23–25th October 1997, which was highly appreciated in the Russian and foreign scientific community. Summarizing its results, a collection of

¹⁰ Konasov V.B., Kuz'minykh A.L. *Nemetskie voennoplennye v SSSR: istoriografiia, bibliografiia, spravochno-poniatiinyi apparat* [German prisoners of war in the USSR: Historiography, bibliography, information-conceptual framework]. Vologda, 2002; Kuz'minykh A.L. *Inostrannye voennoplennye Vtoroi mirovoi voiny na evropeiskom Severe SSSR* [Foreign Prisoners of War during World War II in the European North of the USSR]. Vologda, 2004; Kuz'minykh A.L. *Nemetskie voennoplennye v SSSR: social'no-psikhologicheskii aspekt problemy* [German POWs in the USSR: The socio-psychological aspect of the problem]. *Novaya i novejschaya istoriya* [New and Contemporary History], 2006, no. 1, pp. 168–180.

¹¹ *Uroki i problemy izucheniia istorii vtoroi mirovoi voiny* [Lessons and problems of studying the history of World War II]. *Tezisy nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii* [Abstracts of scientific-practical conference]. Vologda, 1995 (One of the sessions at the conference was devoted to the scientific heritage of Professor A.S. Blank); *Aktual'nye problemy arheografii, istochnikovedeniia i istoriografii. Materialy konferentsii, posviashchennoi 50-letiiu*. [Pobedy Actual problems of archaeography, source study and historiography Proceedings of the conference dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the 1945 victory over Nazi Germany]. Vologda, 1995.

materials was published in two parts¹². Among the authors were the following: M.I. Semiriaga, K. Shtrait, A.I. Borozniak, L.E. Reshin, K. Kirkhner, M.P. Lapteva, Kh. Kislikh-Kekher, M.E. Erin, V.B. Konasov, B.V. Petelin, A.A. Krupennikov, S.V. Kretinin, M. Rossi, V.A. Artemov. The research of problems associated with captivity in war led to the creation of an international society ‘Russian captivity’ in Vologda, which included representatives of the public from Russia, the Ukraine, Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Finland. The Vologda historians were engaged not only with the questions of captivity in war, but also with the anti-fascist Resistance of German patriots. V.B. Konasov and B.V. Petelin’s tutorial, published on this topic, became a useful book both for students and teachers¹³.

B.V. Petelin admits that he owes his academic achievements to Professor A.I. Borozniak, with whom warm relationship was maintained for many years, which, however, did not exclude fierce disputes on many issues and problems of politics, history and public life. Thus, A.I. Borozniak did not consider the German policy of the CDU / CSU a serious factor in the unification of the country. Boris Petelin in his works, relying on the archival documents, substantiated the importance of this policy, especially of Helmut Kohl at the Federal Chancellery. The presentation of monographs on German policy of the CDU / CSU provided an opportunity for the readers to assure themselves in the seriousness of the problem in hand¹⁴.

Boris Valentinovich recalls: “Historical events such as unification or disintegration of the state do not happen by accident, as the oft-recurring chance events becomes a regularity in reality”. Several journalistic publications were also devoted to the unification of Germany¹⁵. The discussions that happened to be during our meet-

¹² See: *Problemy voennogo plena: istoriia i sovremennost'. Materialy Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii 23–25 oktiabria 1997 g. v Vologde: v 2 ch.* [Problems of captivity in war: History and modernity. Materials of the International Scientific Conference held on 23–25th October 1997 in Vologda: In 2 parts]. Vologda, 1997.

¹³ See: Konasov V.B., Petelin B.V. *Soprotivlenie i plen: dokumenty i materialy po istorii antifashistskogo dvizheniya Soprotivleniia i voennogo plena v Germanii i SSSR. 1939–1955 gg. Ch. I* [Resistance and captivity: Documents and materials on the history of the anti-fascist movement of the Resistance and captivity in war in Germany and the USSR. 1939–1955 Part I]. Vologda, 2000.

¹⁴ Petelin B.V. *HDS/HSS i ob"edinenie Germanii* [CDU / CSU and the unification of Germany]. Vologda, 2002; Idem. *Germanskaia politika kantslera Gel'muta Kolia 1982–1990 gg.* [German policy of Chancellor Helmut Kohl 1982–1990]. Vologda, 2004.

¹⁵ See, for example: Petelin B.V. *Schast'e, svalivsheesia s neba», ili byl li plan ob"edineniia Germanii?* [‘Happiness fallen out of the sky’, or was there a plan for unifying Germany?]. *Rossia i sovremennyi mir* [Russia and the Modern World], 2002, no. 4, pp. 162–170; Idem. *Ob"edinenie Germanii 1989–1990 gg.: istoriograficheskii aspekt* [Unification of Germany 1989–1990: Historiographic aspect]. *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia* [New and Contemporary History], 2003, no. 1, pp. 30–47; Idem. “Dokument Portugalova” o pozitsii sovetskogo rukovodstva po germanskomu vo-prosu. 21 noiabria 1989 g. [‘Portugalov’s Document’ regarding the position of the Soviet leadership

ings proved to be extremely useful for me. He understood my evaluations and agreed, when there were enough arguments to prove the evidence. In any scientific dispute, this is not only permissible, but also necessary in search for truth. In 2003, Alexander Ivanovich sincerely congratulated me on defending my doctoral dissertation at Ivanovo State University.

There was one more entry in his biography, which cannot be ignored. When from the late 1980s the country was open for changes, Boris Petelin took the most active part in the social and political activity. He was a participant in the first Congress of civil, democratic and patriotic ‘forces’ in Moscow, the first All-Russian ‘monarchical’ conference, and many other political events held in the 1990s in Moscow, St Petersburg and other Russian cities. He got acquainted with famous politicians and public figures, such as: S. Baburin, S. Glaz’iev, N. Narochnitskaia, A. Rutskim, V. Aksyuchits, V. Osipov, V. Klykov, N. Lysenko ... He tried to get his point across his students’ circles advocating his solid citizenship.

The present-day development of German studies in Russia relates to the activities of the German Historical Institute Moscow (DHI Moscow). Its grand opening took place in September 2005 with the participation of many Russian and German historians and specialists, among whom was B.V. Petelin. He was acquainted with the founder and the first director of DHI, Dr. Bernd Bonwetsch, from the time of his first internship in Germany (2000), at Ruhr University Bochum, where professor Bernd Bonwetsch was affiliated. These ties helped deepen the study of German history. At the Faculty of History at Vologda State Pedagogical Institute, the ‘Society for the studies in German history’ was established. Its meaningful result was the publication of the collection of student works, most of which were devoted to the history of National Socialism¹⁶. The number of reports at student scientific conferences increased. Vologda students took an active part in the International scientific seminar devoted to the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the FRG and the USSR and the problems of captivity in war in the European North (Vologda, 17–18th October 2005).

on the German question. 21st November 1989]. *Voprosy istorii* [Questions of History], 2005, no. 10, pp. 3–9.

¹⁶ The collection dedicated to the memory of Professor A.S. Blank included 11 short articles written by full-time graduates of Faculty of History and distance education departments. See: *Spetsseminar «Noveishaia istoriia Germanii». Sb. studencheskikh rabot. Vyp. I* [Special seminar ‘The contemporary history of Germany’. Collection of student works. Issue I]. Vologda, 2005.



Petelin with the first director of the German Historical Institute Moscow, professor Bernd Bonwetsch, on the 10th anniversary of the German Historical Institute Moscow in September 2015

The seminar was held with the support of the St Petersburg branch office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (led by Ms. E. Bauer), in which, along with the German and Russian colleagues, participated such well-known and competent authorities in German history as A.M. Filitov (Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow), Doctor of Historical Sciences N.V. Pavlov (Institute of World Economy and International Relations, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow), Doctor of Historical Sciences F.I. Novik (Institute of Russian History, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow), Doctor of Historical Sciences B.M. Tupolev (Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow), Doctor of Historical Sciences M.E. Erin (P.G. Demidov Yaroslavl State University, Yaroslavl), who convincingly showed that the traditions in the study of German history in Vologda are alive and filled with new content¹⁷. With the beginning of B. Petelin's work at Cherepovets State University, the practice of organizing international scientific meetings was continued. Thus, the international scientific symposium was held in 2009, 2015 and 2016, and the international Internet conference also took place then. Since 2011, the Russian-German seminar '*Vereinigung*' has existed, with the official website of the same name. And from now forward, there have been various scientific events organized in Vologda and Cherepovets by B.V. Petelin.

¹⁷ *Ustanovlenie diplomaticheskikh otnoshenii mezhdru SSSR i FRG. Nemetskie voennoplennye v SSSR. Materialy mezhdunarodnogo nauchnogo seminaru. Vologda, 17–18 oktiabria 2005* [Establishing diplomatic relations between the USSR and the FRG. German prisoners of war in the USSR. Materials of the international scientific seminar. Vologda, 17–18th October 2005]. Vologda, 2006.

I am glad that the German studies have not vanished here, that all events arranged by Boris Valentinovich are distinguished in their relevance, information awareness and scientific rigor. I am aware that in 2013 in Yaroslavl, Professor B.V. Petelin, M.E. Erin and A.I. Borozniak discussed the possibility of creating the North-West Center for German Studies. Aleksandr Ivanovich proposed to create it in Cherepovets, however B.V. Petelin, considering the actual state of things, supported Professor M.E. Erin in that the center should be in Yaroslavl. The unexpected death of Mikhail Egorovich deprived them of the opportunity to carry out their plans.

Unfortunately, in 2015 Professor A.I. Borozniak passed away. On 16–17th February 2017, the scientific conference ‘Overcoming the past in Germany and Russia: Experience and lessons for the future’ was held at Lipetsk State Pedagogical University with the support of the German Historical Institute Moscow, the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, dedicated to the memory of Professor A.I. Borozniak. The welcoming speech was made by the Vice-Rector of the Lipetsk State Pedagogical University N.V. Fedina, Director, Professor Dr. Nikolaus Katzer of DHI Moscow; one could also hear the welcome address by Deputy Head of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Candidate of Historical Sciences V.V. Ishchenko and Prof. Dr. B. Bonvech (Germany).

The participants of the conference, including the leader of the ‘*Vereinigung*’ seminar, Doctor of Historical Sciences B.V. Petelin, shared the personal memories of A.I. Borozniak, talked about his life and creative career, scholarly work and teaching activities. They also visited the site of his burial, honoring the memory of the remarkable scientist and a person. Following the results of the conference, a scientific collection was published¹⁸.

I have been a regular participant of respectable seminars over a decade, organized by Boris Valentinovich. All of them were arranged with the support of St Petersburg branch office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (led by Ms. E. Bauer). Every seminar was brilliant, thanks to Boris Valentinovich. Excellent collections of materials were published. The anniversary celebrant demonstrated the example of highly professional editing. I was chief editor of a scientific journal for 14 years, and I know how hard it might be.

I happened to be the reviewer of monographs and tutorials written by this person. I would give the following overall score for them. The problematic areas have been

¹⁸ Petelin B.V. Vologda v zhizni i nauchnoi deiatel'nosti Aleksandra Ivanovicha Borozniaka [Vologda in the life and scientific work of Aleksandr Ivanovich Borozniak]. *Preodolenie proshlogo v Germanii i Rossii: opyt i uroki na budushchee (pamiati professora A.I. Borozniaka): materialy Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii (g. Lipetsk, 16–17 fevralia 2017)* [Overcoming the Past in Germany and Russia: Experience and Lessons for the Future (in memory of Professor A.I. Borozniak): Materials of the International Scientific Conference (Lipetsk, 16–17th February 2017)]. Lipetsk, 2017, pp. 23–30.

mastered, with relation to the origins of German Christian democracy. The balance of power in the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) of Germany in 1976–1982 was revealed. A systematic reconstruction of the German policy of the sixth Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Helmut Kohl, was carried out. The conceptions for foreign policy of the long-term chairman of the Christian-Social Union (CSU) of the FRG Franz Josef Strauss were studied in detail. The performance review and the growth options for the national German studies were considered as well.

The method of bloc presentations of the materials is brilliantly implemented in the following tutorials: Petelin B.V. World monetary-financial and payment systems in the history of the 19th–21st centuries: Textbook. Cherepovets: Cherepovets State University, 2017. 102 p. (co-author); Petelin B.V. Evolution of systems in international relations of the 20th–21st centuries: Textbook. Cherepovets: Cherepovets State University, 2016. 127 pp.; Petelin B.V. Countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe: The main stages of development in 1945–2000: Textbook. Cherepovets: State University, 2008. 155 p.

I wish him further creative success, both in science and teaching. I know that many professional historians who know Boris Valentinovich Petelin as a talented teacher, thoughtful scientist and responsible citizen would join my wishes too.

Mikhail Strelets

Doctor of Historical Sciences, Professor
Brest State Technical University
Brest, Belarus
mstrelez@mail.ru

For citation: Strelets M. B.V. Petelin: scientist, educator and citizen. *Historia provinciae – the journal of regional history*, 2018, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 4–13.